

"Withdrew that proposition because such was the hostility of public men with regard to Canada and the treatment of Canada by their fishermen that if to-morrow any relaxation of the tariff of the United States was made by an Act of Congress, it would contain a clause excepting Canada from its operation so as to deny us the advantage."

That was Sir Charles Tupper's statement, as explicit and as express as words could be, that he found it impossible and that Mr. Bayard found it impossible to carry out Mr. Bayard's proposition to induce them to negotiate on trade questions, because such was the hostility created in the minds of American public men by our treatment of United States fishermen that he could not hope for a hearing. I leave to the House to consider, when a gentleman so well versed in the details of this case as the Minister of Justice must naturally be, can make two such assertions in the course of an hour's speech, so totally at variance with the facts actually before him and some of which he actually quoted, I ask how can he expect us to believe that he is perfectly correct in all the minute details which he proceeded to inflict upon the House as to the *Molie Adams*, the *D. J. Adams*, or any other of the numerous family of Adams which were brought in contact with our cruisers. I will take occasion to call the attention of the House to a very unfair allegation made by the Minister of Justice with respect to the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies). He alleges that my hon. friend was to blame and that he showed he had no proper conception of the case, because he made the complaint that in these 63 seizures which were made by us in 1886, almost all the seizures were made, not for a violation of our fishery regulations, not because the American boats had been caught poaching in our waters, but on account of a breach of some petty Customs regulations committed in harbor. The Minister of Justice attempts to say that there is a contradiction in the argument of my hon. friend for Queen's. The argument of my hon. friend from first to last, was that the gentlemen opposite continued—at any rate except in very few and very rare instances—to seize these American fishing boats not because they were poaching in Canadian waters, not because they were improperly taking fish, but that they pursued them in an inhospitable and foolish manner considering the relations of the two countries, for certain petty breaches of Customs laws which fishermen could hardly be expected to be familiar with; and that in so doing they undoubtedly did to a very great extent—as not my friend from Queen's, but as Sir Charles Tupper pointed out—exasperate the people of the States, exasperate the fishermen, exasperate Congress, exasperate the whole press of the United States and by their conduct bring us into a very perilous position as regards the United States. I further call the attention of the House to this: that the hon. gentleman, the Minister of Justice, wisely perhaps did not attempt in the slightest degree to explain away the statement made by Sir Charles Tupper, quoted by me on a recent occasion, and quoted again by my hon. friend, to show that, be it right or be it wrong—for the moment we will not discuss that question—the policy of the Government had brought us to the verge of commercial war—as Sir Charles Tupper declared, within an ace of actual war—with the United States; had brought the people of the United States into a state of extreme, it may be unreasonable, exasperation. That the hon. gentleman did not attempt to deny or explain. What he did attempt to do was, forsooth, cram into the minds of the members of this House—men who must be supposed to have some acquaintance with affairs—that preposterous, ridiculous statement, that whereas we seized 68 vessels for various breaches of the fishery regulations or the Customs laws in 1886, while in the succeeding year we did not arrest one, yet there was no change of policy. Sir, is there a man within the sound of my voice who could believe such a statement to be possible? Sir Charles Tupper declared more than once that fishermen were—I suppose those of Canada as well as of the United States—a most lawless set of men, who could not easily be

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controlled; and yet the hon. the Minister of Justice says that the reason there were no seizures or arrests made in 1887, was that the American fishermen were converted all at once into most peaceable and law-abiding persons. We have heard of certain very miraculous conversions, there is no doubt of it; but the conversion of the American fishermen, who were described by Sir Charles Tupper as a most lawless crew, into peaceable and law-abiding citizens, so that not one of them, though there were 800 or more vessels in our waters, ever committed the smallest breach of the fishery regulations or the Customs laws from the beginning of the season of 1887 to the close, is certainly a most remarkable occurrence. Well, I leave to the Minister of Justice or his colleagues to reconcile the repeated statements made by Sir Charles Tupper when he was advocating the passage of the Fishery Treaty in this House, that he was obliged to make numerous concessions for the sake of peace, with the declaration of the First Minister that no concessions at all were made. These two statements cannot both be true, and I leave it to the hon. gentlemen—it is no particular concern of mine—to say which is the truth. I humbly submit that the two positions are utterly irreconcilable, to say the least. But my intention in rising was not so much to deal with what I must, in humble imitation again of Sir Charles Tupper, describe as the narrow view taken of the Convention of 1818 by the First Minister and the then Minister of Marine. My position to-night is this: that by the conduct of the Government we are brought face to face with the situation described by Sir Charles Tupper in words which I do not require to repeat; and, under these circumstances, although I admit most freely that my hon. friend took a grave responsibility on himself when he offered his advice to the Government on this critical question, I say that if ever the leader of an Opposition was justified from the past conduct of the Government, in taking the sense of the House as to the future policy of the Government, my hon. friend has been justified on this present occasion. Now, Sir, I have said before, and I repeat, that until these discussions commenced, very few people in Canada—I suppose but few in this House, I know but few in the country—ever comprehended the extreme peril into which, by the evidence of their own commissioner, the conduct of the Government in 1886 had dragged the people of Canada in 1887. Sir, the Opposition may have been to blame; they may have done wrong; but if there is anything that the Opposition in this House are to blame for, if there is anything we have to reproach ourselves with, it is not that we have spoken out now, but that we have been reticent so long when we saw how these hon. gentlemen were abusing their trust. Sir, we had an excuse. So long as those negotiations were pending, so long as there was a reasonable chance that the Government would be able to bring them to a profitable conclusion, so long I think there was an excuse for the Opposition remaining silent; but it is only too clear, not from the words so much as from the acts of the Government, that from the moment at any rate that Sir Charles Tupper turned his back upon them, they have become utterly oblivious of the possible consequences of the events of 1886 and 1887. Seeing that the Government of Canada were entering on a dangerous policy which had already placed the country on the brink of a commercial war, we asked them if they intended to revert to the *modus vivendi*. If they did not mean to do so, then all we can say is that their conduct in refusing to say so is quite inexplicable. Now, three things, it appears to me, are perfectly clear from the facts disclosed by Sir Charles Tupper in the speech to which I have referred. One of those I have repeated—and it cannot be repeated too often—is that the Government in 1886, by their very strict interpretation of an old and all but obsolete convention, without bearing in mind the changes that have taken place in the circumstances of the country since, had brought us